

March 18, 2011

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to read my letter. I am in full support of House Bill 6599, An Act Concerning Discrimination. I'd like to start with a quick description - I am 49 years old and have been working for the State of Connecticut for over 25 years. I am married and we have two lovely children, ages 10 and 15. For all intent and purpose, my life is similar to yours. I go work, own a home, attend church and school events, visit with neighbors and pay taxes. The one big difference is that I am transgender.

Presently, the laws of the State of Connecticut do not *explicitly* protect me from employment discrimination. Thus, I am risking my livelihood by writing this letter and making my story public. The current law also does not *explicitly* protect me from discriminatory actions in housing and public accommodation situations, thus I am opening myself to discrimination by writing you.

Although there is currently a Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) ruling that clarifies that state law protects people from discrimination based upon gender identity and expression, HB6599 would make these protections explicit and uniform. Explicit protection - legislative protection - would protect my employment status as my gender expression and identity differs from that traditionally associated with my assigned birth sex. It would allow me to continue to be a productive public servant and support both myself and my family without the fear of unwarranted repercussions solely in response to my gender expression.

The protections offered in HB6599 will help numerous individuals who are experiencing discrimination because of their gender identity and expression. When passed, the bill will also add the State of Connecticut to the list of 13 states and 130 municipalities that have expanded their non-discrimination laws to include gender identity or expression.

Thank you for considering this bill and I urge you to vote for HB6599. Voting for this act will help to reduce the incidents of discrimination in Connecticut and increase the productivity and safety of employees, consumers and residents.

Sincerely,

Dalia Panke
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